

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL H. ARMACOST
UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
JUNE 23, 1988

MR. CHAIRMAN, MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

I WELCOME THIS OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS OUR AFGHANISTAN POLICY WITH YOU THIS AFTERNOON. I AM PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO DO SO NOT ONLY BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN MOVING TOWARD ATTAINING THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES OF THAT POLICY, BUT BECAUSE THIS HEARING PROVIDES AN OCCASION FOR ME TO EXPRESS OUR APPRECIATION FOR THE STRONG, BIPARTISAN SUPPORT WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM THIS COMMITTEE AND MANY OTHERS IN THE CONGRESS IN PURSUING THOSE OBJECTIVES. OUR POLICY TOWARD AFGHANISTAN PROVIDES EVIDENCE THAT CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION CAN WORK EFFECTIVELY TOGETHER TO BRING ABOUT HISTORIC RESULTS IN THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM.

OUR AIMS IN AFGHANISTAN HAVE BEEN CONSISTENT SINCE THE SOVIETS INVADED THAT SMALL, TRADITIONALLY NON-ALIGNED NATION IN DECEMBER 1979. THEY WERE, AND REMAIN: RAPID AND COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET TROOPS, RESTORATION OF AFGHANISTAN'S INDEPENDENT AND NON-ALIGNED STATUS, RETURN OF THE REFUGEES IN SAFETY AND HONOR, AND SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE AFGHAN PEOPLE.

THESE OBJECTIVES HAVE BEEN WIDELY SHARED BY OTHER NATIONS, AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITIES WHICH HAVE EACH YEAR SUPPORTED THE PAKISTAN-SPONSORED U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION. EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY REPRESENT THE GOALS OF THE PEOPLE OF AFGHANISTAN THEMSELVES. THE VALIANT STRUGGLE OF THE AFGHANS, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THEIR FRIENDS, IS WHAT HAS MADE OUR POLICY ACHIEVEMENTS POSSIBLE.

THE SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF THE GENEVA ACCORDS ON APRIL 14 PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK FOR ATTAINING OUR POLICY GOALS. ABOVE ALL, IT CALLS FOR THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF THE SOVIET OCCUPYING ARMY. MOSCOW IS OBLIGED TO REMOVE HALF ITS TROOPS BY AUGUST 15 AND THE REMAINDER BY FEBRUARY 15, 1989, AND IN FACT FOREIGN MINISTER SHEVARDNADZE INDICATED TO US THAT THE SOVIETS EXPECTED THE WITHDRAWAL WOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF 1988. THIS, IN TURN, WILL REMOVE THE PRINCIPAL IMPEDIMENT TO ACHIEVEMENT OF OTHER GOALS, PARTICULARLY THE SAFE RETURN OF REFUGEES AND THE CREATION OF A BROADLY-BASED GOVERNMENT REPRESENTING THE AFGHAN PEOPLE.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS ACCOMPLISHMENT CANNOT BE OVERSTATED. THE 1979 INVASION MARKED THE FIRST TIME SINCE THEIR OCCUPATION OF EASTERN EUROPE IN THE FINAL MONTHS OF WORLD WAR II THAT THE SOVIETS HAD SEIZED TERRITORY BY MILITARY

FORCE. A BLATANT VIOLATION OF AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY TO SALVAGE COMMUNIST RULE IN KABUL. IT BROUGHT MOSCOW'S ARMY AND AIRFORCE TO THE BORDERS OF THE INDO-PAKISTAN SUBCONTINENT AND TO WITHIN STRIKING DISTANCE OF THE PERSIAN GULF. IT WAS AN AFFRONT TO AFGHAN SELF-DETERMINATION AND A CHALLENGE TO THE PEACE, STABILITY AND SECURITY OF THE REGION. THE REACTION OF THE UNITED STATES, AND THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF NATIONS, WAS STRONG OPPOSITION TO THE SOVIET ACTIONS AND SUPPORT FOR THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE.

THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE SOVIET FORCES -- NOW WELL UNDER WAY -- IS PERHAPS AN EVEN MORE HISTORIC MILESTONE. ITS IMPLICATIONS GO WELL BEYOND THE RESTORATION OF THE STRATEGIC BALANCE OF THE REGION AND THE REBIRTH OF AN INDEPENDENT AFGHANISTAN, IMPORTANT AS THESE ARE. IT STRENGTHENS THE CAUSE OF SELF-DETERMINATION EVERYWHERE. IT COULD ALSO LEND IMPETUS TO EFFORTS TO RESOLVE OTHER REGIONAL CONFLICTS.

YOU WILL RECALL THAT WHEN WE AGREED IN PRINCIPLE IN DECEMBER 1985 TO PAKISTAN'S REQUEST THAT WE SERVE AS A CO-GUARANTOR WITH THE USSR, WE DID SO ON CONDITION THAT THE ACCORDS BE SATISFACTORY TO US. IT WAS ONLY WHEN WE WERE SO SATISFIED THAT WE TOOK ON THE CO-GUARANTOR ROLE AND, WITH THE SOVIET UNION, UNDERTOOK TO RESPECT THE AGREEMENTS ARRIVED AT BY PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN. WE INSISTED, MOREOVER, THAT THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE GUARANTORS MUST BE BALANCED AND

SYMMETRICAL. WE WERE PREPARED TO ACCEPT A JOINT U.S.-SOVIET MORATORIUM ON FURTHER MILITARY SUPPLIES TO AFGHAN PARTIES DURING THE PERIOD OF THEIR WITHDRAWAL AND SEVERAL MONTHS THEREAFTER. THE SOVIETS REFUSED SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT, INSISTING ON THEIR RIGHT TO CONTINUE PROVIDING MILITARY SUPPLIES TO THEIR CLIENT GOVERNMENT IN KABUL. WE CONSEQUENTLY INSISTED THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD RETAIN AND EXERCISE THE RIGHT, CONSISTENT WITH ITS OWN OBLIGATIONS AS A GUARANTOR, TO PROVIDE MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO PARTIES IN AFGHANISTAN. SHOULD THE SOVIET UNION EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN PROVIDING MILITARY ASSISTANCE, THE U.S. SIMILARLY WILL EXERCISE RESTRAINT.

THE SOVIETS ARE WITHDRAWING THEIR TROOPS AS STIPULATED IN THE ACCORDS. WE ESTIMATE THAT AROUND 25,000 TROOPS HAVE LEFT THEIR GARRISONS. OVER HALF OF THESE HAVE ALREADY CROSSED INTO THE SOVIET UNION. THE SOVIETS ARE THUS PROCEEDING ON THE BASIS OF THE SCHEDULE AGREED TO AT GENEVA. SOVIET TROOPS THUS FAR HAVE LEFT MOST OF EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN AFGHANISTAN, INCLUDING THE MAJOR CITIES OF JALALABAD, GHAZNI, AND GARDEZ. THESE AREAS ARE NOW FREE OF SOVIET TROOPS. IN THE COMING WEEKS, WE EXPECT TROOPS IN THE WESTERN PORTION OF THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING THE CITIES OF KANDAHAR, SHINDAND, AND HERAT, TO BE WITHDRAWN. A WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET FORCES IN THIS AREA WOULD BRING THEM TO THE 50 PERCENT MARK. PREPARATIONS FOR THE WITHDRAWAL CONTINUE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, HOWEVER, AND THE SOVIETS COULD MOVE OTHER FORCES FIRST IF THEY WISH TO DO SO.

THUS FAR, THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL HAS BEEN FAIRLY UNEVENTFUL. THE MUJAHIDDIN HAVE HARASSED SOME WITHDRAWING SOVIET COLUMNS, BUT HAVE NOT MOUNTED MAJOR ATTACKS. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT MUJAHIDDIN COMMANDERS IN SOME AREAS HAVE CONCLUDED LOCAL CEASEFIRES WITH THE DEPARTING SOVIET TROOPS -- PREFERRING TO PRESERVE THEIR SUPPLIES FOR THE BATTLE AGAINST THE FORCES OF THE REGIME.

IN THEIR EFFORTS TO BOLSTER THE KABUL REGIME, THE SOVIETS ARE TURNING OVER LARGE QUANTITIES OF MILITARY SUPPLIES TO THE REGIME'S ARMED FORCES. AS THE GENEVA ACCORDS CAME INTO EFFECT ON MAY 15, GENERAL GROMOV, THE SOVIET COMMANDER IN AFGHANISTAN, ANNOUNCED THAT MOSCOW WOULD LEAVE BEHIND "FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT" VALUED AT ONE BILLION DOLLARS. IN ADDITION TO CONSUMABLE SUPPLIES SUCH AS AMMUNITION, THE SOVIETS ARE ALSO DELIVERING HEAVY EQUIPMENT SUCH AS ARMORED FIGHTING VEHICLES AND TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT. SOME OF THIS IS BEING BROUGHT IN FROM THE SOVIET UNION.

THESE SOVIET EFFORTS HAVE NOT CHECKED THE CONTINUING DETERIORATION IN THE POSITION OF THE KABUL REGIME. SOME 20 GARRISONS AND DISTRICT TOWNS HAVE FALLEN TO THE RESISTANCE IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS. MUCH OF THE AREA VACATED BY THE SOVIETS HAS BEEN ABANDONED BY OR TAKEN FROM THE NAJIBULLAH ARMY. THE MAJOR CITY OF KANDAHAR IS UNDER SERIOUS PRESSURE FROM THE

MUJAHIDDIN. ITS FALL WOULD CONSTITUTE A SEVERE BLOW TO A REGIME ALREADY WRACKED BY FACTIONAL IN-FIGHTING AND DESERTIONS FROM ITS ARMED FORCES.

THE RESISTANCE IS WELL POSITIONED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE NEW SITUATION CREATED BY THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL. ITS COMMANDERS HAVE DISPLAYED AN IMPRESSIVE ABILITY TO WORK TOGETHER IN TACTICAL OPERATIONS DESPITE DIFFERING PARTY ALLEGIANCES. IT IS VERY WELL SUPPLIED. THE MATERIEL IT HAS RECEIVED FROM ITS FRIENDS HAS BEEN MASSIVELY SUPPLEMENTED BY EQUIPMENT CAPTURED FROM SURRENDERING OR RETREATING AFGHAN FORCES. IN SEIZING THE EASTERN AFGHANISTAN STRONGHOLD OF ALI KHEL, FOR EXAMPLE, THE MUJAHIDDIN ACQUIRED MATERIEL THAT WOULD PROVIDE THEM THE MEANS TO FIGHT THE WAR THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY FOR MORE THAN A MONTH.

THE RAPID DETERIORATION OF THE REGIME'S PRESENT SITUATION AND ITS POOR FUTURE PROSPECTS HAVE PROMPTED MOSCOW TO LAUNCH A VOLLEY OF CHARGES ALLEGING THAT PAKISTAN IS VIOLATING THE GENEVA ACCORDS BY AIDING THE MUJAHIDDIN. PAKISTAN DENIES THAT IT IS VIOLATING THE ACCORDS AND HAS GRANTED STAFF OF THE UNITED NATIONS GOOD OFFICES MISSION FOR AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN (UNGOMAP) ACCESS TO BORDER AREAS. ISLAMABAD HAS ALSO REPORTED SHELLING AND STRAFING OF PAKISTAN BORDER TOWNS BY THE FORCES OF NAJIBULLAH.

AS WE TOLD THE SOVIETS AT THE MOSCOW SUMMIT WHEN THEY

RAISED THE ISSUE, WE FULLY SUPPORT THE SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF OUR PAKISTANI ALLY. WHILE WE COMMENDED THE SOVIETS AT THE SUMMIT FOR MAKING THE DECISION TO WITHDRAW, WE ALSO UNDERScoreD THAT WE AND OTHER COUNTRIES EXPECT TO SEE THEM COMPLETE THAT WITHDRAWAL ON SCHEDULE.

SO FAR WE SEE NO EVIDENCE THAT THE SOVIETS DO NOT INTEND TO MEET THEIR TROOP WITHDRAWAL DEADLINES ON AUGUST 15 AND FEBRUARY 15, 1989. THEY HAVE CONFIRMED TO US THAT THERE IS NO CHANGE IN THE TIMETABLE. WE BELIEVE THAT IN CHARGING THAT PAKISTAN IS VIOLATING THE ACCORDS, MOSCOW EVIDENTLY HOPES TO BUILD UP PRESSURE ON THE PAKISTANIS TO REIN IN THE MUJAHIDDIN. THE CHARGES COULD ALSO SERVE THE SOVIETS BY IDENTIFYING A CONVENIENT SCAPEGOAT FOR THE SERIOUS SETBACKS THE KABUL REGIME HAS SUFFERED. THE SOVIETS MAY ALSO HOPE TO DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN US AND THE PAKISTANIS.

WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY MAINTAINED THAT THE PREREQUISITE FOR AFGHAN SELF-DETERMINATION IS SOVIET WITHDRAWAL. THE CURRENT REGIME IN KABUL IS ONLY THE MOST RECENT IN THE LINE OF FAILED ADMINISTRATIONS INSTALLED BY SOVIET BAYONETS. IT IS ILLEGITIMATE AND LACKS ANY SEMBLANCE OF POPULAR SUPPORT. ONLY THE SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE ENABLES IT TO SURVIVE. ITS REPEATED EFFORTS OVER THE PAST 18 MONTHS TO BROADEN ITS SUPPORT THROUGH A VARIETY OF APPEALS FOR SO-CALLED NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND OFFERS TO THE OPPOSITION OF A SHARE IN POWER ARE BOGUS AND HAVE EVOKED NO SIGNIFICANT RESPONSE.

WE BELIEVE THAT AFGHANISTAN'S FUTURE POLITICAL COURSE MUST BE LEFT TO THE AFGHAN PEOPLE THEMSELVES TO DECIDE. THE U.S. HAS NO BLUEPRINT FOR AFGHANISTAN. NOR DO WE FAVOR ANY GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE BRITISH IN THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE SOVIETS IN THIS ONE SUGGESTS THAT THE AFGHANS DO NOT TAKE KINDLY TO EFFORTS BY OUTSIDERS TO CHOOSE A GOVERNMENT FOR THEM.

WE HOPE THAT THE AFGHANS WILL BE ABLE TO DEVELOP A PROCESS FOR SELECTING A GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AFGHAN SOCIETY. WE SUPPORT THE EFFORTS OF U.N. UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL DIEGO CORDOVEZ TO PROMOTE A DIALOGUE AMONG THE AFGHAN PARTIES. HIS AIM IS TO WORK OUT A TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENT AS A STEP TOWARD SELF-DETERMINATION. WE DO NOT KNOW IF HIS EFFORTS WILL BE SUCCESSFUL.

WE CONTINUE TO URGE THE RESISTANCE TO OVERCOME ITS FACTIONAL DIFFERENCES. WE ARE HEARTENED BY EVIDENCE THAT THE MUJAHIDDIN ARE MAKING EFFORTS TO INCREASE COOPERATION BOTH AMONG COMMANDERS IN THE FIELD AND AMONG THE RESISTANCE PARTIES. I HAVE NOTED THE BETTER COORDINATION OF THE RESISTANCE MILITARY EFFORT WITHIN AFGHANISTAN, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL BEGAN. THE RESISTANCE ALLIANCE HAS RECENTLY ANNOUNCED BOTH A CABINET FOR ITS PROPOSED INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND PLANS TO HOLD ELECTIONS WITHIN THE NEXT FEW

MONTHS. THESE PLANS ARE TENTATIVE AND MAY BE MODIFIED OVER TIME, BUT THEY DO SHOW THAT THE RESISTANCE RECOGNIZES THE NEED FOR GREATER COOPERATION AND IS ATTEMPTING TO BRING THIS ABOUT.

WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT KIND OF GOVERNMENT THE AFGHANS WILL CHOOSE. BUT I AM CONFIDENT THAT A FREE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT WILL EVENTUALLY EMERGE WITH WHICH THE UNITED STATES WILL ENJOY THE FRIENDLY RELATIONS WHICH CHARACTERIZED U.S.-AFGHAN TIES BEFORE THE COMMUNIST COUP OF 1978 AND THE SOVIET OCCUPATION WHICH FOLLOWED.

AS PART OF OUR ONGOING EFFORT TO KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE RESISTANCE AND THE REFUGEES, WE HAVE SENT PERIODIC SPECIAL MISSIONS TO SUPPLEMENT OUR REGULAR STAFF IN ISLAMABAD AND PESHAWAR. OUR CURRENT PLANS INCLUDE THE ASSIGNMENT OF A VERY WELL-QUALIFIED, LANGUAGE-TRAINED OFFICER TO SERVE AS AMBASSADOR RAPHEL'S SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR AFGHAN AFFAIRS. HE WILL BE SPENDING MUCH OF HIS TIME IN CONTACT WITH RESISTANCE FIGURES IN PESHAWAR AND ELSEWHERE.

IN LINE WITH OUR OBJECTIVE OF PROMOTING A PEACEFUL AND STABLE AFGHANISTAN, THE U.S. EXPECTS TO PLAY A ROLE IN HELPING THE AFGHAN PEOPLE GET BACK ON THEIR FEET AND REBUILD THEIR WAR-DEVASTATED COUNTRY. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION WILL BE A MAJOR CHALLENGE. APPROXIMATELY THREE MILLION AFGHANS FLED TO PAKISTAN IN THE YEARS FOLLOWING THE

SOVIET INVASION; ANOTHER TWO MILLION ARE ESTIMATED TO BE LIVING IN IRAN. IN ADDITION, SEVERAL MILLION HAVE BEEN DISPLACED WITHIN AFGHANISTAN ITSELF. IN FACT, POPULATION DISTRIBUTION WITHIN THE COUNTRY HAS BEEN DRAMATICALLY ALTERED, PUTTING SIGNIFICANT PRESSURE ON AFGHANISTAN'S FRAGILE INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE SLENDER FOOD RESOURCES OF MANY REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY. THE WIDESPREAD SOWING OF LITERALLY MILLIONS OF LANDMINES HAS ADDED AN OMINOUS NEW DIMENSION TO THE REHABILITATION EFFORT. THE REFUSAL THUS FAR OF THE USSR OR THE NAJIBULLAH REGIME TO HELP LOCATE AND REMOVE THESE MINES IS A MORAL OUTRAGE AND INCONSISTENT WITH THEIR COMMITMENT IN THE GENEVA ACCORDS TO FACILITATE THE RETURN OF THE REFUGEES.

WE HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY ENGAGED WITH THE U.N. AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS IN PLANNING FOR THE REPATRIATION OF THE REFUGEES, AND THE RESETTLEMENT OF THESE PEOPLE AND OF DISPLACED PERSONS WITHIN AFGHANISTAN. ASSISTANT SECRETARY WILLIAMSON HAS BEEN COORDINATING OUR EFFORTS IN THIS AREA AND WILL NOW DESCRIBE THEM FOR YOU.